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ANGEL OF DEATH





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ANGEL OF DEATH.



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W. L. G. J. H. H. of

THE ANGEL OF DEATH.

TRANSLATED FROM THE SWEDISH

BY

A. W. ALMQVIST.

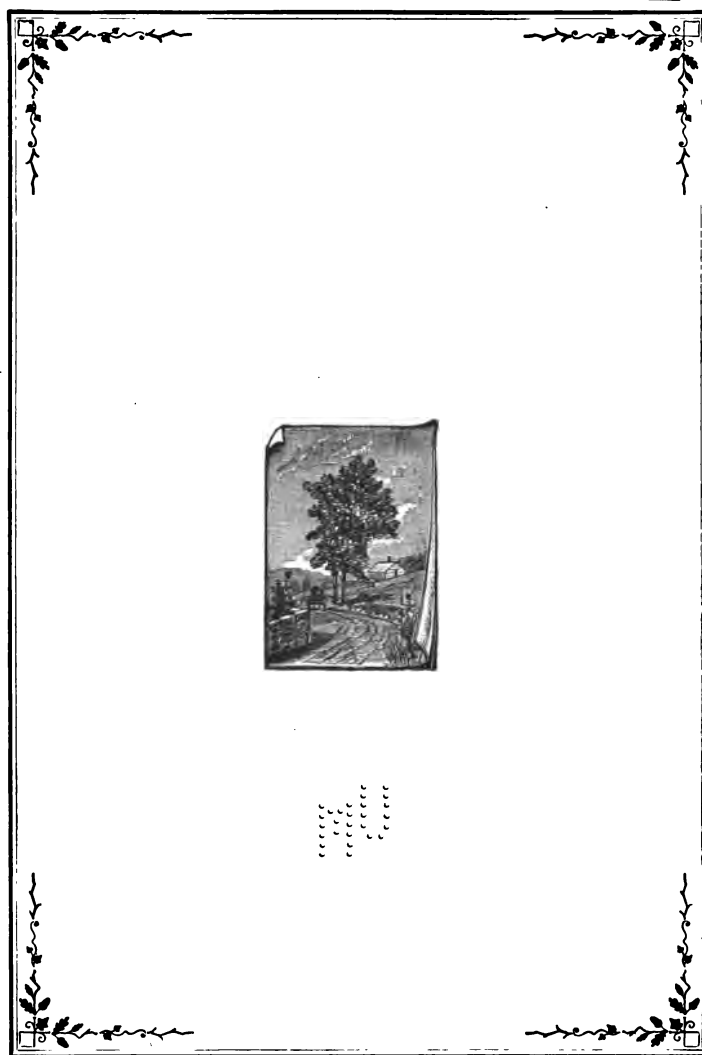
SECOND EDITION.



BLOOMFIELD, N. J.

A. W. ALMQVIST, 165 FRANKLIN STREET.

1892.

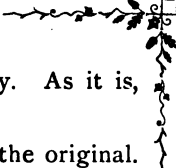
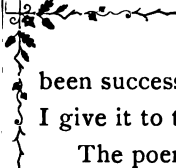


Sign. in. a. i.
J. J. J. J. J.
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PREFACE.

The original, of which this is a translation, is universally considered one of the very best among many beautiful poems written by the same illustrious author. The sublime didactic thoughts therein expressed, in language majestic and yet so simple, have won for it a constantly increasing popularity; and, during half a century, in a language so rich in literary beauties as the Swedish, have maintained it among the foremost of poetical productions of its kind.

A correct English translation, therefore, is fraught with difficulties which but few persons can appreciate. It has been my aim to reproduce the poem in the original meter, with the rhymes in their proper places. Of course, care has been taken to preserve the sense, and even the *idioms* of the original. How far I have





been successful it is hardly for me to say. As it is,
I give it to the reading public.

The poem has undoubted merits in the original.
If the merits are concealed in the translation, the
fault is mine.

A. W. ALMQVIST.



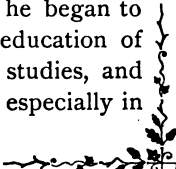
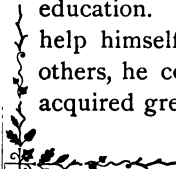


BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR.

Gathered from the files in the Royal Academy
of Sciences, Stockholm, Sweden.

JOHAN OLOF WALLIN, (pronounced Valleen), the author of the "ANGEL OF DEATH," was a native of Sweden, and was born in the parish of Stora Tuna, in the province of Dalarne (Dalecarlia), October 15, 1779. His father was a military man, and some time after Johan's birth became captain of the Dalecarlia regiment. The future poet and preacher was one of a large family, much larger than accorded well with the somewhat restricted means of the captain of a regiment.

At a very early age, young Johan evinced a taste for books, and for study generally; but the circumstances of his family were not such as to encourage the hope of an academic career. As has often happened in such circumstances, the talents of the boy commanded attention; and he was not left without a good primary education. At the early age of thirteen he began to help himself; and, by taking part in the education of others, he contrived to prolong his own studies, and acquired great proficiency in the classics, especially in



Latin. When only seventeen years of age, he made his first public appearance at the Gymnasium of Westerås, and by the delivery of a poetical speech in Latin—a speech which is still preserved and which is remarkable for its literary merits—he astonished all his seniors. Henceforth Johan Olof Wallin was a marked man among his contemporaries.

It was not long after this triumph at the Gymnasium, that young Wallin felt discouraged for the want of funds. It was now desirable that he should give himself to the higher department of study under competent teachers; but money was needed, and he knew not where to find it. In his difficulty he felt strongly tempted to give up his studies, and to give himself to his father's profession. His delicate health, however, stood in the way; and, happily, a serviceable situation as teacher having offered itself, he was saved to literature. In the fall of 1799, after a most creditable examination, he was entered as student at the Upsala Academy. His career as a student was marked by great success, especially in literature and philosophy; and, in 1803, he took his Doctor's degree. In the same year, he obtained a prize from the Swedish Academy,* for poetical translations

*The Swedish Academy is composed of eighteen men, selected from among the most learned and literary men of the country, and is the highest tribunal to pass upon the merits of poetical essays and works of literature in general; and the very fact, that a person has been awarded a prize by this Academy, is alone sufficient to insure for him an imperishable name in the annals of Swedish literature.

of four of the Odes of Horace. Wallin was now in his twenty-fourth year.

Encouraged by success, Johan tried the Academy again, and was successful in carrying off, in one session, three prizes, the largest number ever before awarded to one person, at one anniversary. One of them was the "Grand Prize," and was awarded to a poem, called "The Educator." Some of the lines give promise of the temple-orator that was to be :

"Thou sentinel on high ! Will night not vanish soon ?
We doubt the sheen of stars and quiet path of moon ;
We placed our trust in Thee. Enlight the races striving !
Will night yet long endure ? Is morning's watch arriving."*

Other poems followed. By this time, Johan, who had, from an early period, shown a liking for the clerical profession, had passed all his preliminary examinations with honors, and been ordained to the pastoral office. He commanded attention, at once, as a preacher. But he clung to the muses, or the muses clung to him ; and his lyre, having been tuned in harmony with his sacred calling, he soon began to distinguish himself as a writer of hymns. Some of the finest hymns of which the Swedish language can boast, are from the pen of Johan Olof Wallin. Nor were secular themes wholly neglected. On January 20, 1808, on the occasion of the unveiling

*"Du väktare i skyn ! Är natten ännu lång ?
Vi tro ej stjernans ljus, ej månans stilla gång
Vi trodde uppå dig. Så upplys jordens släkten !
Är natten ännu lång ? Och kommer morgonväkten ?"

of the statue of King Gustavus Third, he produced the famous Dithyramb, a song which has taken a permanent and honored place in Swedish literature. The same year he presented a similar poem to the Swedish Academy, and was rewarded with a prize of two hundred ducats, the highest prize ever given by the Academy.

In all great questions of a national or international character, Wallin took a deep and lively interest; and the powerful influence, which he exerted with tongue and pen, was always wielded in favor of the right. How well he knew how to seize upon and turn to account existing circumstances and passing events, is strikingly illustrated by his poem on George Washington; his Dithyramb celebrating the union of Sweden and Norway, and his splendid ode on the victories of the allies at Leipzig, Dennewitz and Grossbeeren. The last named composition had an immense success; and it was circulated by thousands among the soldiers of the Swedish army abroad.

Wallin was at home in the region of sublime and lofty thought; but his muse was not one-sided, or in any sense monotonous. Poems of a calm, reflective character flowed gracefully from his pen; and, when occasion called for the one or the other, he revealed rich veins of satire and humor. One great secret of his literary success, both as a poet and preacher, lay in the simplicity of his style. With him there was never any striving after effect. His thoughts, whether of a

lofty or commonplace character, whether hortatory or didactic, whether satirical or humorous, always found natural and easy expression in language which was as direct as it was graceful and easily understood.

At the comparatively early age of thirty years, Wallin had taken his place in the front rank of the scholars and public men of his day; and whatever honors were in the gift of his admiring countrymen, were freely showered upon him. Of these honors we mention only a few.

In 1810, he was elected a member of the Swedish Academy; and on several occasions he was raised by acclamation to the proud position of chairman and orator of that learned body. In 1815, he was made Knight of the Royal Order of the North Star; and in the same year he became Dom-prost, an office next in order to the Bishop's, and was honored with a seat in Parliament. In 1818, he was made Pastor Primarius, and President of the Consistory of Stockholm; and about this time he became an active and useful member of the Royal Musical Academy. In 1824, he was raised to the dignity of Bishop of the Church, and became commander of the Royal Order of the North Star and honorary member of the Royal Academy of Literature, History and Antiquities. Of this high body he was four times elected Chairman. In 1828, he was elected member of the Royal Academy of Sciences; ten years later he was made Praeses. In 1830, he was elected Court Preacher, and Praeses or President of the Royal

Consistory. In 1837, his honors culminated. He was elected a member of the Upsala association for the promotion of Science; also member of the Serafimer Order, a distinction rarely conferred except on royal persons and princes of the blood, when he adopted as his motto, "In Omnipotenti Vinces." In the same year, he became archbishop of Sweden and pro-chancellor of the University of Upsala.

The "ANGEL OF DEATH," singularly characteristic of the author, immediately after its publication took its place in the front rank of the poetic productions of the language. The poem has never ceased to be popular. It is issued each successive year in thousands, and in all sorts of editions,—some of the recent *editions de luxe* are marvels of costly taste and typographic skill. His poetic productions are numerous, and they are all of a high order of merit. The "ANGEL OF DEATH," however, partly on account of the undying interest of the subject, and partly, also, because of its bold and daring thought and vigorous expression, is that by which he is best known, and with which his name is destined to be indissolubly linked.

Wallin is remembered as a great churchman, as well as scholar and poet. As a preacher, he had few if any equals. Of dignified aspect, gifted with a rich sonorous voice, and visibly impressed at all times with the solemn character of his mission, he presented the very ideal of the pulpiteer; and, whenever and wherever he appeared, he was attended by admiring crowds composed of all

ranks and classes of the people.* As a hymn-writer he had also great success; and to his taste and skill, the Swedish Church is indebted for its finest collection of sacred songs.† How gracefully Tegner refers to him in his poem, "The Children of the Lord's Supper," every reader of Longfellow is well aware:

"Hark ! then roll forth at once the mighty tones of the organ,
Hover like voices from God, aloft like invisible spirits;
Like as Elias in heaven, when he cast from off him his mantle,
So cast off the soul its garment of earth, and with one voice,
Chimed in the congregation, and sang *an anthem immortal*
Of the sublime Wallin, of David's Harp in the North-land."

For thirty-one years, Wallin occupied a place, prouder, in many respects, than the Swedish throne itself,—recognized and honored by his countrymen as their greatest scholar, their greatest preacher, and one

*His great popularity with the masses naturally caused them to apply to him for all sorts of information and advice, with full confidence that he knew how to assist and advise in all matters. As an example of his oft peculiar way of treating queer questions, and yet satisfying the questioner, the following may be related: For about twenty years a number of writs and fore-tellings had frightened credulous people with the prediction that the world would perish on a certain given date. As the time drew near that date Wallin was besieged for information as to the validity of the said prediction. To the constantly repeated question, "Is it true, Bishop, that the world shall perish on Thursday?" Wallin had always the same answer: "Please call again on Friday, and I will let you know." The questioner withdrew consoled.

†Wallin not only revised completely the old hymn-book of the church, but composed a very large number of the divinely beautiful and universally celebrated songs, of which the present Swedish hymn-book is composed.

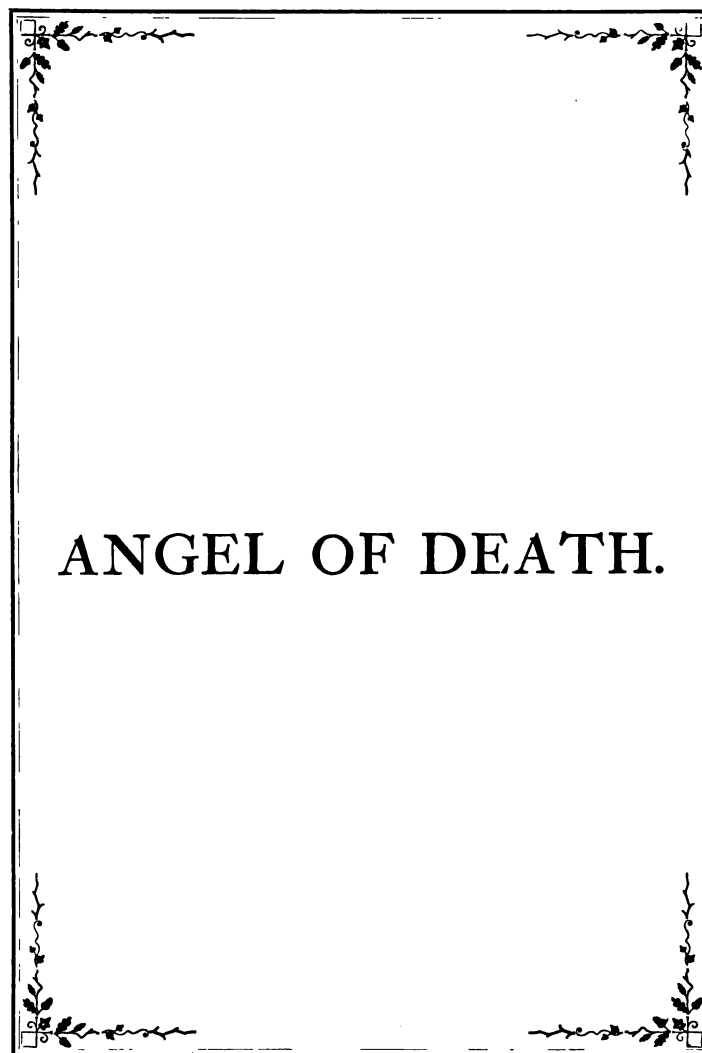
of their greatest poets. In June, 1839, in his sixtieth year, the angel of death, of whom he had written so well, approached him with his sad summons; and, amid the regrets and sorrows of a whole nation, his lofty spirit took its flight to those purer regions, in which, in imagination, it already long had dwelt. He was buried in the new cemetery in Stockholm, which he himself had consecrated; and his grave is adorned with a large and appropriate monument.

At the first anniversary meeting of the Swedish Academy, after his death, Bishop Tegner read a memorial poem highly eulogistic of the deceased, and which ended as follows :

“ And, tire, as it speeds along,
The lightly flying Swedish song ;
Then let its weary wings be rested,
Against thy grave—and soar anew
To starry realms again, to you,
With prestige by the Learned Circle vested,
Thou bard like few ! Prime speaker uncontested ! ”*

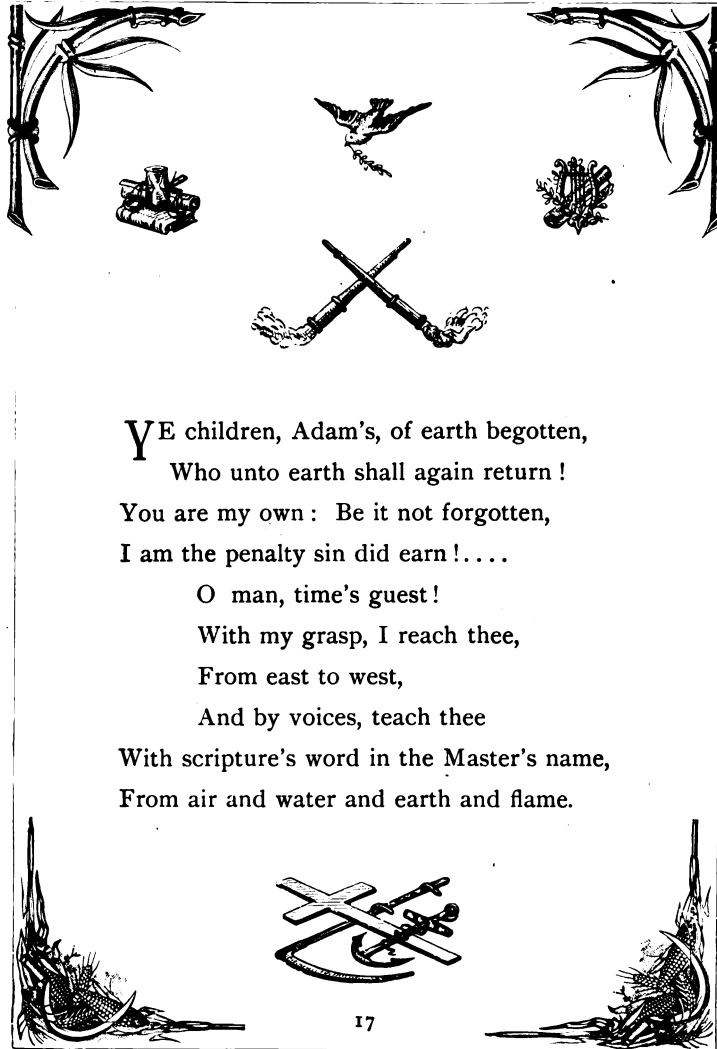
*The literal translation of the last two lines (impossible to retain while maintaining the original meter) is :

Thou first voice in the Literary Circle !
Thou poet as few ! Thou orator as none !



ANGEL OF DEATH.



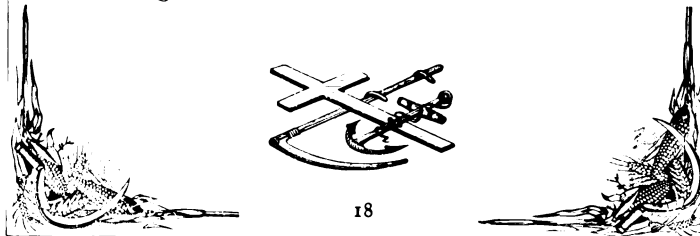


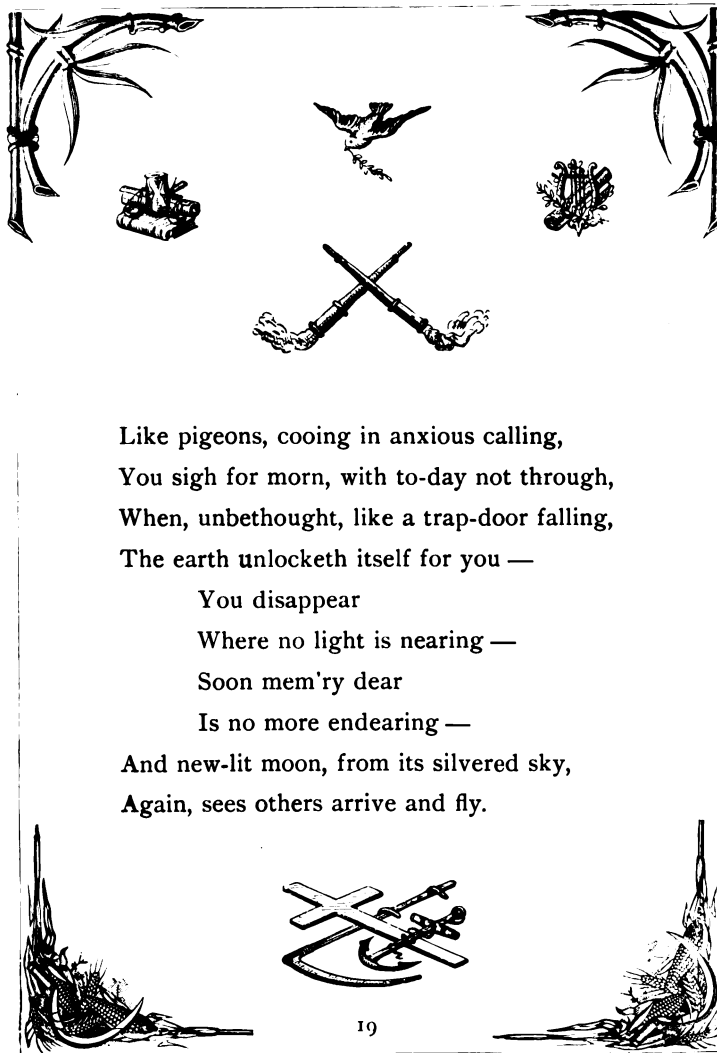
YE children, Adam's, of earth begotten,
Who unto earth shall again return !
You are my own : Be it not forgotten,
I am the penalty sin did earn !

O man, time's guest !
With my grasp, I reach thee,
From east to west,
And by voices, teach thee
With scripture's word in the Master's name,
From air and water and earth and flame.



You build and dwell like the sparrows, building,
In sunny summer, their fragile nest :
Securely feeling, in shady shielding,
They sing so joyful in happy rest ;
 But sudden gust
 Of the tempest shatters
 The tiny crust
 Of their nest in tatters —
The merry song, heard so short before,
With grief is silenced forevermore.

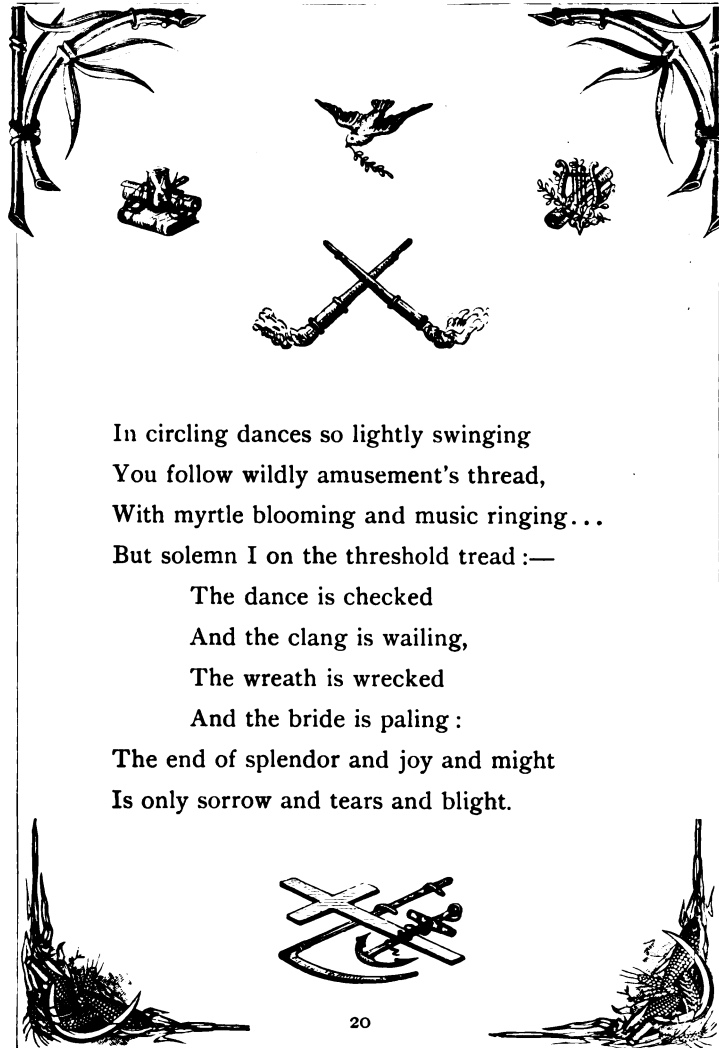




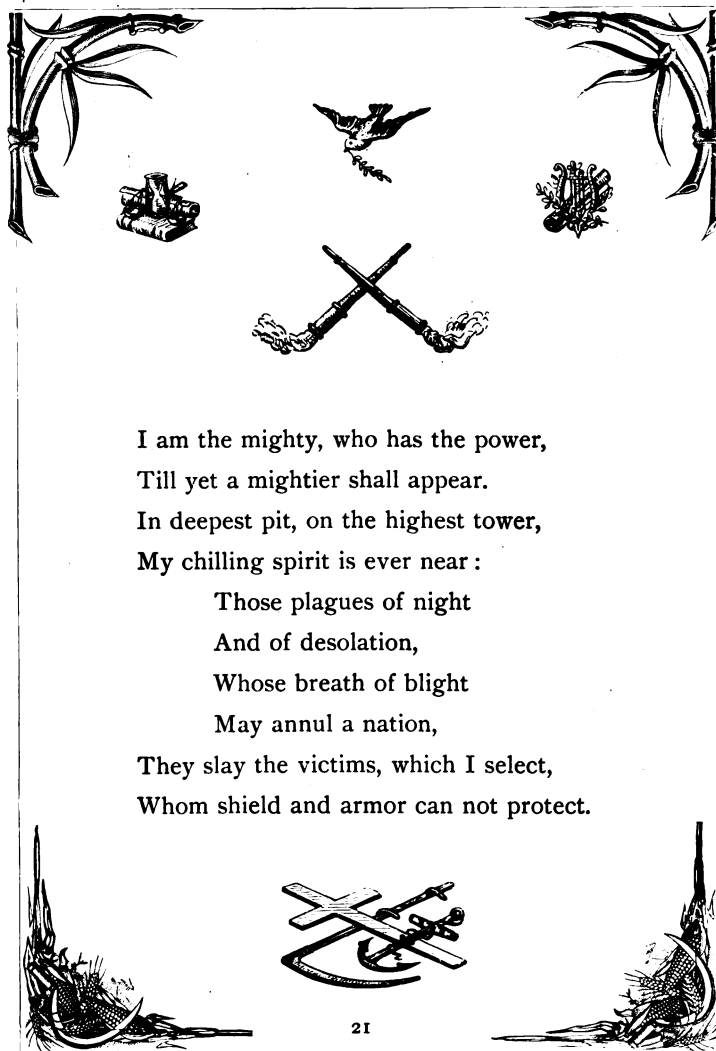
Like pigeons, cooing in anxious calling,
You sigh for morn, with to-day not through,
When, unbethought, like a trap-door falling,
The earth unlocketh itself for you —

You disappear
Where no light is nearing —
Soon mem'ry dear
Is no more endearing —

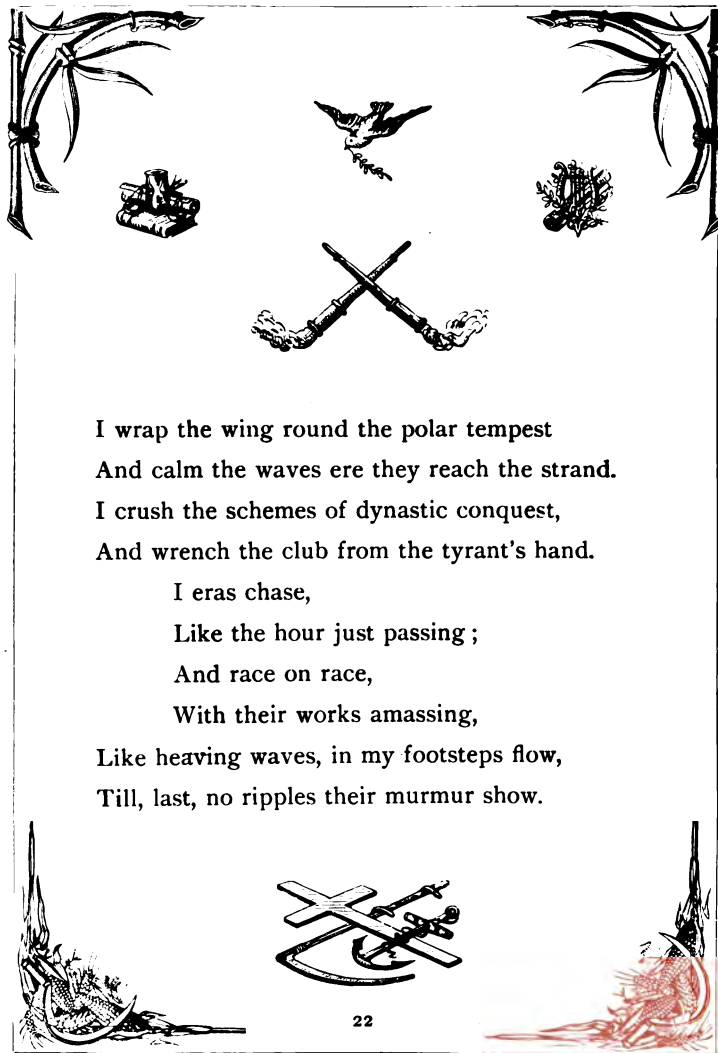
And new-lit moon, from its silvered sky,
Again, sees others arrive and fly.



In circling dances so lightly swinging
You follow wildly amusement's thread,
With myrtle blooming and music ringing...
But solemn I on the threshold tread :—
 The dance is checked
 And the clang is wailing,
 The wreath is wrecked
 And the bride is paling :
The end of splendor and joy and might
Is only sorrow and tears and blight.

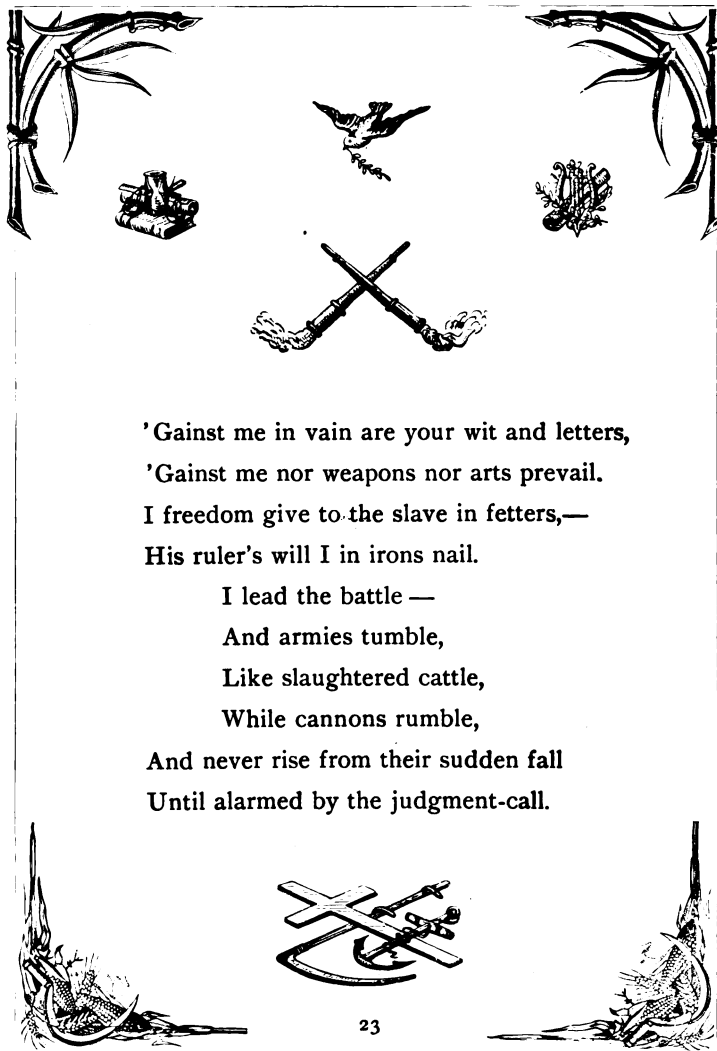


I am the mighty, who has the power,
Till yet a mightier shall appear.
In deepest pit, on the highest tower,
My chilling spirit is ever near :
 Those plagues of night
 And of desolation,
 Whose breath of blight
 May annul a nation,
They slay the victims, which I select,
Whom shield and armor can not protect.



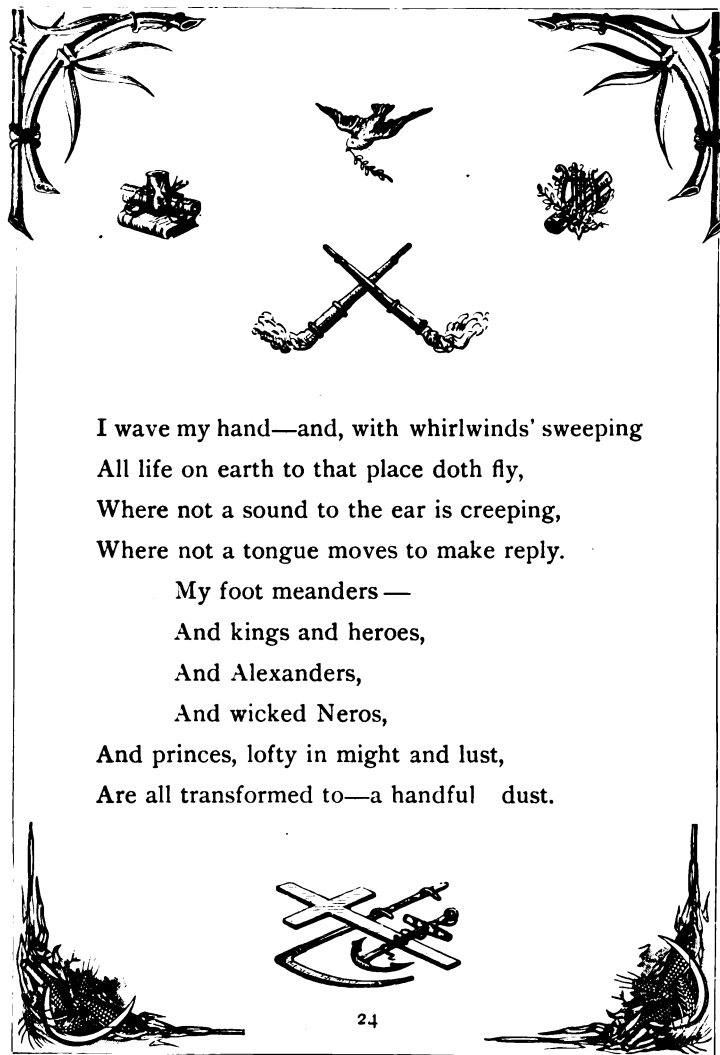
I wrap the wing round the polar tempest
And calm the waves ere they reach the strand.
I crush the schemes of dynastic conquest,
And wrench the club from the tyrant's hand.

I eras chase,
Like the hour just passing ;
And race on race,
With their works amassing,
Like heaving waves, in my footsteps flow,
Till, last, no ripples their murmur show.



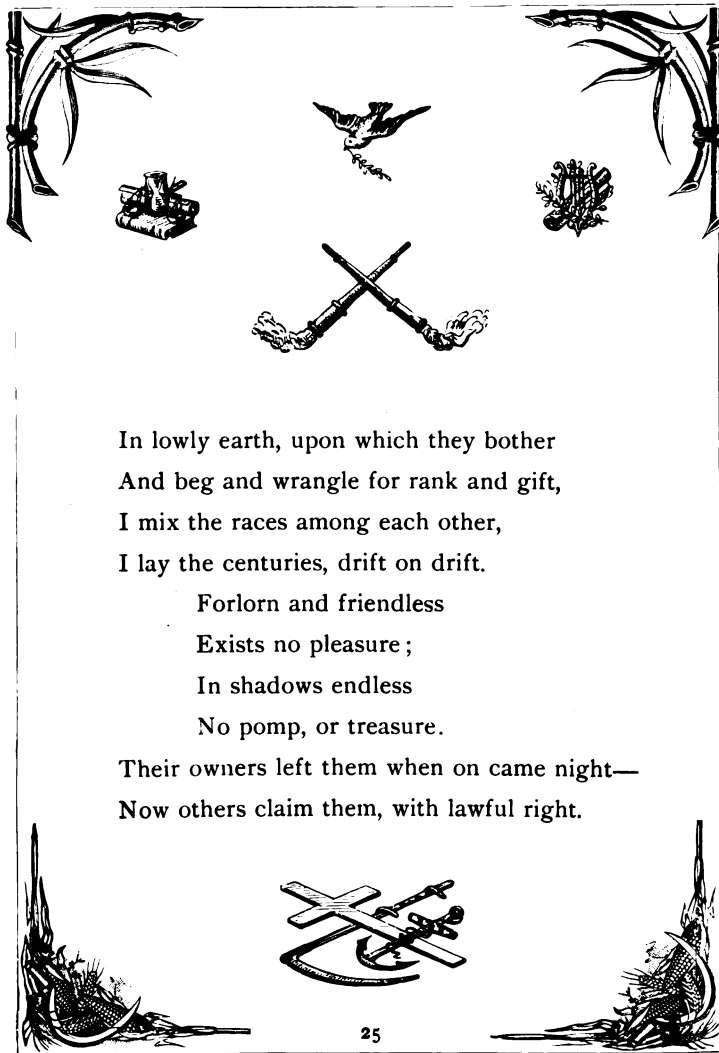
'Gainst me in vain are your wit and letters,
'Gainst me nor weapons nor arts prevail.
I freedom give to the slave in fetters,—
His ruler's will I in irons nail.

I lead the battle —
And armies tumble,
Like slaughtered cattle,
While cannons rumble,
And never rise from their sudden fall
Until alarmed by the judgment-call.



I wave my hand—and, with whirlwinds' sweeping
All life on earth to that place doth fly,
Where not a sound to the ear is creeping,
Where not a tongue moves to make reply.

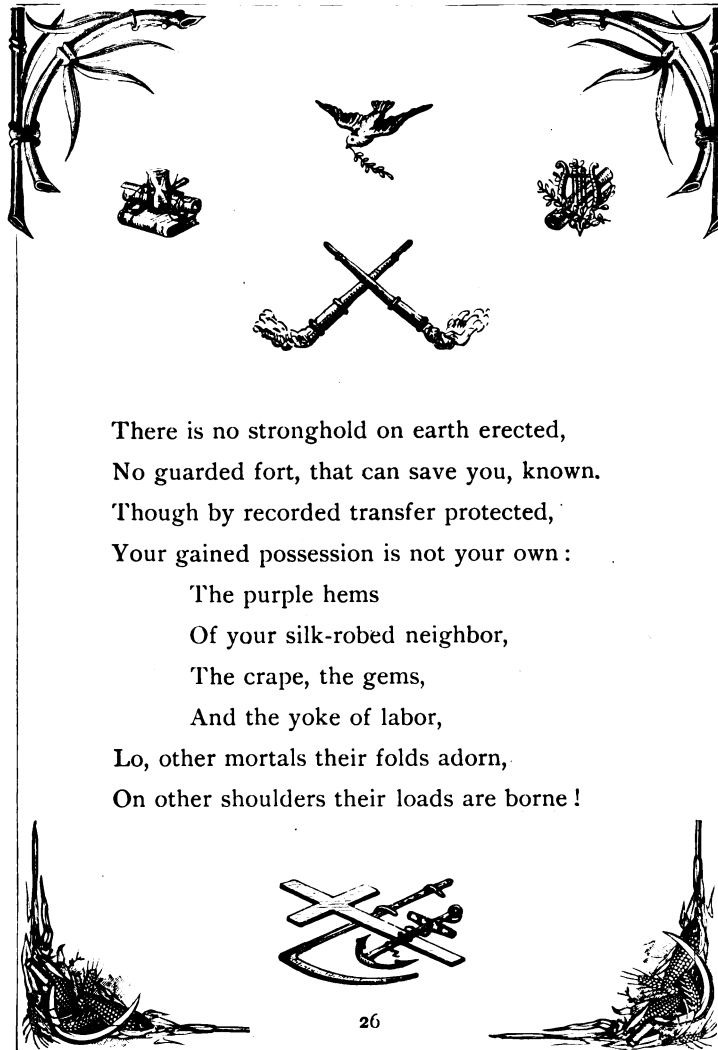
My foot meanders —
And kings and heroes,
And Alexanders,
And wicked Neros,
And princes, lofty in might and lust,
Are all transformed to—a handful dust.



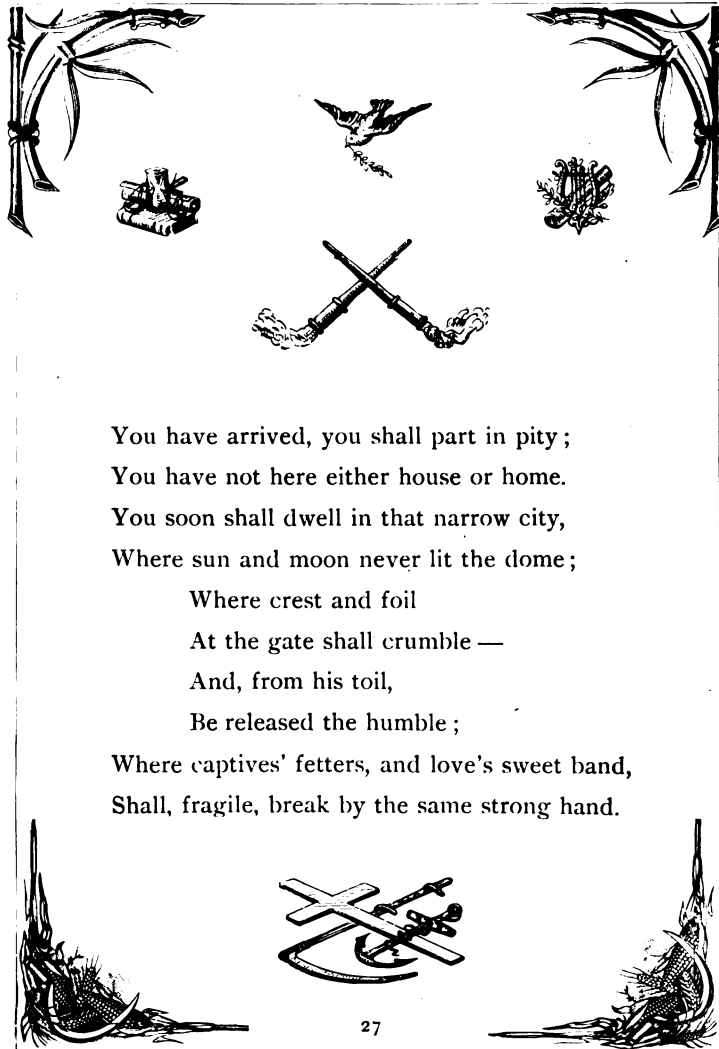
In lowly earth, upon which they bother
And beg and wrangle for rank and gift,
I mix the races among each other,
I lay the centuries, drift on drift.

Forlorn and friendless
Exists no pleasure ;
In shadows endless
No pomp, or treasure.

Their owners left them when on came night—
Now others claim them, with lawful right.

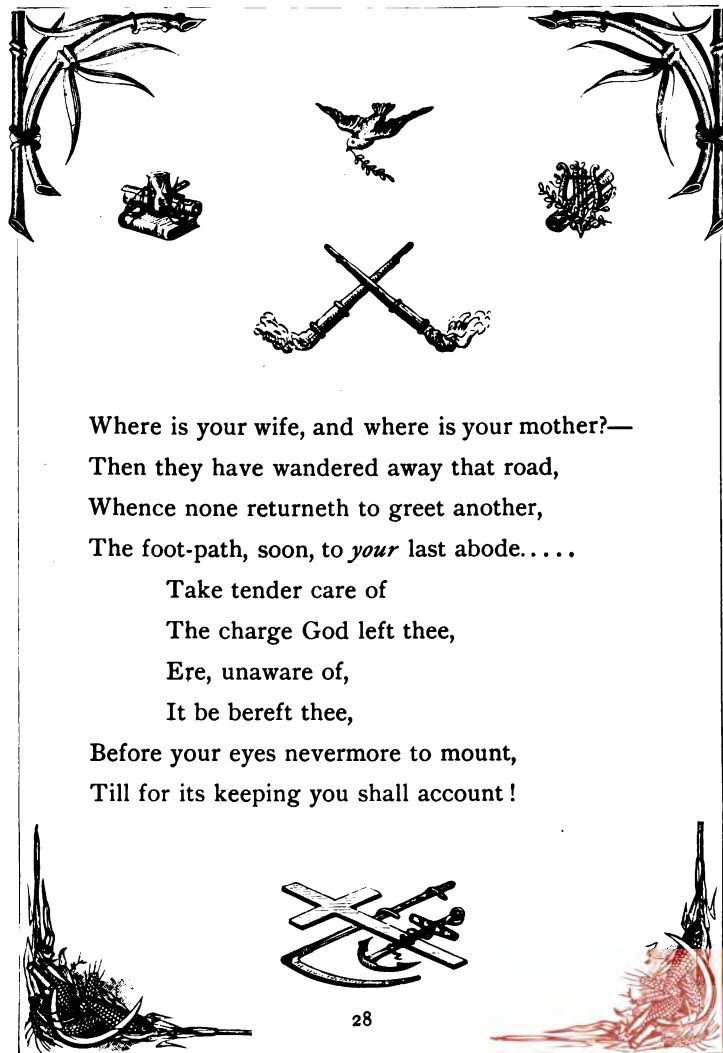


There is no stronghold on earth erected,
No guarded fort, that can save you, known.
Though by recorded transfer protected,
Your gained possession is not your own :
 The purple hems
 Of your silk-robed neighbor,
 The crape, the gems,
 And the yoke of labor,
Lo, other mortals their folds adorn,
On other shoulders their loads are borne !



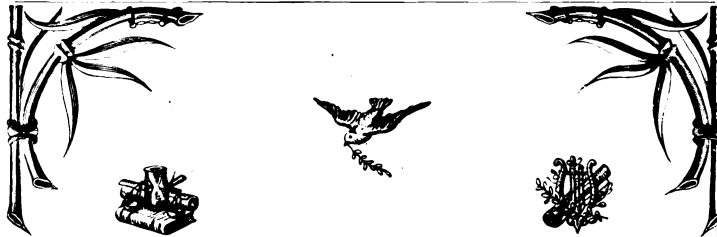
You have arrived, you shall part in pity ;
You have not here either house or home.
You soon shall dwell in that narrow city,
Where sun and moon never lit the dome ;
Where crest and foil
At the gate shall crumble —
And, from his toil,
Be released the humble ;

Where captives' fetters, and love's sweet band,
Shall, fragile, break by the same strong hand.



Where is your wife, and where is your mother?—
Then they have wandered away that road,
Whence none returneth to greet another,
The foot-path, soon, to *your* last abode.....

Take tender care of
The charge God left thee,
Ere, unaware of,
It be bereft thee,
Before your eyes nevermore to mount,
Till for its keeping you shall account !



“Where is your brother? Where is your equal?”

Will *then* be questions too late to heed.

You *then* find brethren—such is the sequel —

You spiteful rich, in the worms you feed !

And when they fattened,

Like you, expire,

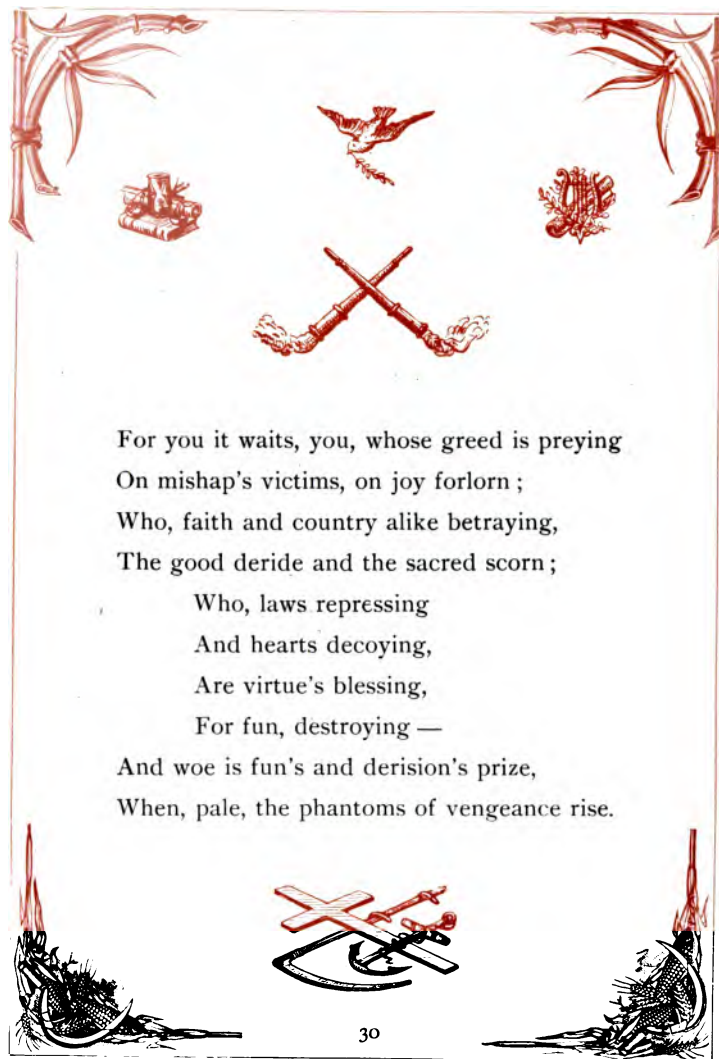
A reptile batten'd

Shall growth acquire,

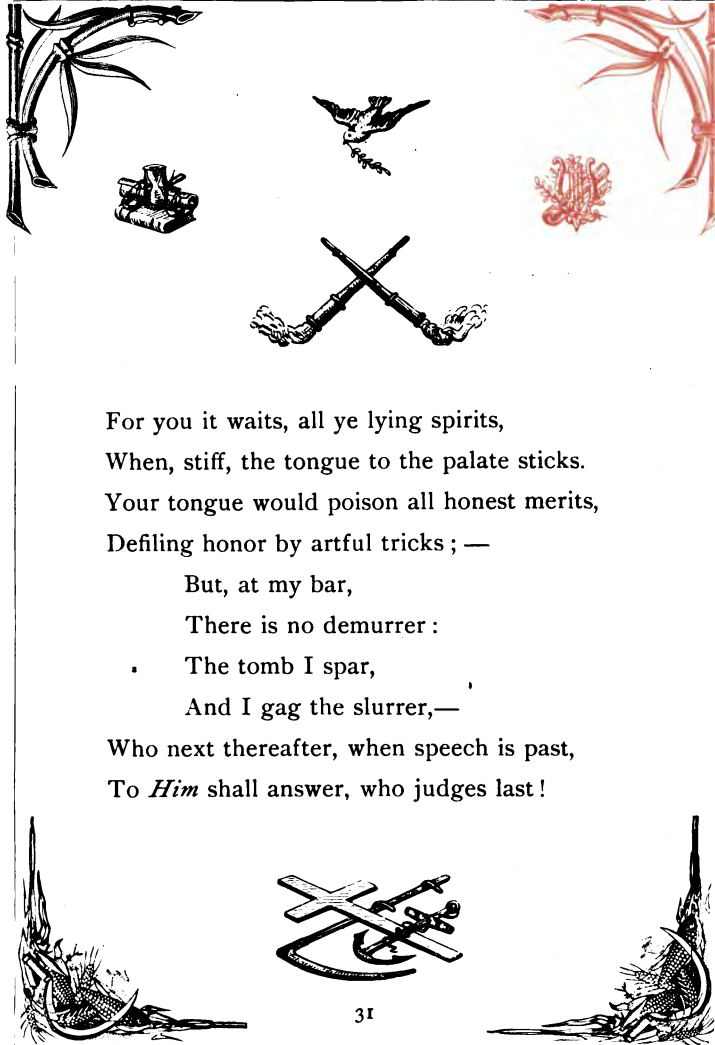
Whose stings and gnawing shall never cease.

Upon your conscience, devoid of peace.





For you it waits, you, whose greed is preying
On mishap's victims, on joy forlorn ;
Who, faith and country alike betraying,
The good deride and the sacred scorn ;
 Who, laws repressing
 And hearts decoying,
 Are virtue's blessing,
 For fun, destroying —
And woe is fun's and derision's prize,
When, pale, the phantoms of vengeance rise.



For you it waits, all ye lying spirits,
When, stiff, the tongue to the palate sticks.
Your tongue would poison all honest merits,
Defiling honor by artful tricks ; —

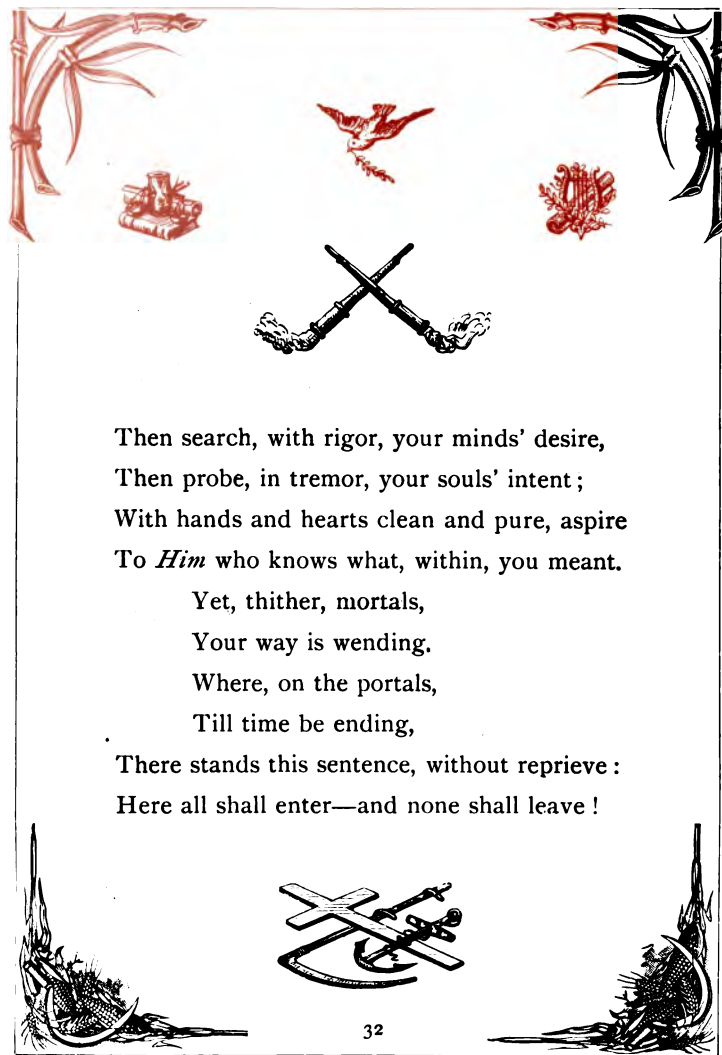
But, at my bar,

There is no demurrer :

• The tomb I spar,

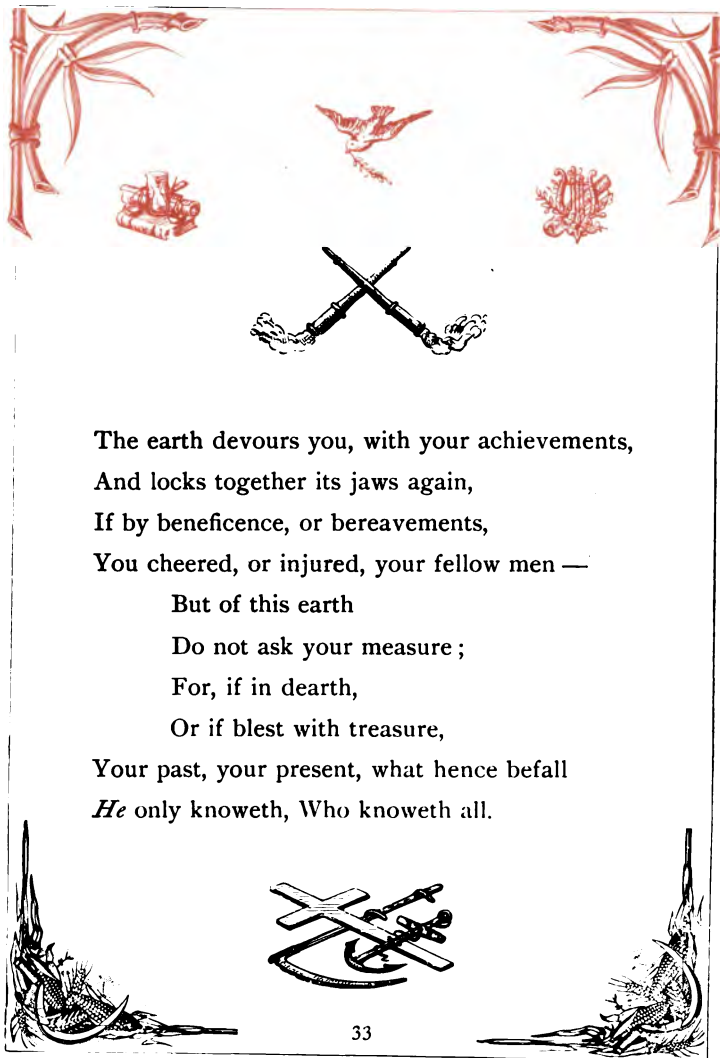
And I gag the slurrer,—

Who next thereafter, when speech is past,
To *Him* shall answer, who judges last !

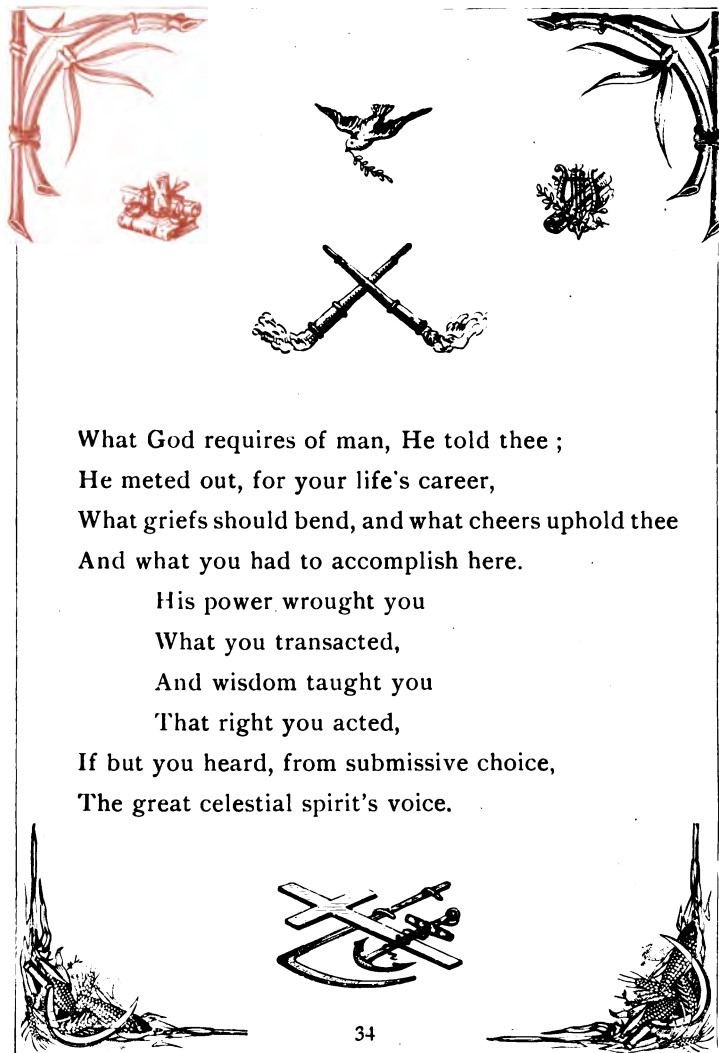


Then search, with rigor, your minds' desire,
Then probe, in tremor, your souls' intent ;
With hands and hearts clean and pure, aspire
To *Him* who knows what, within, you meant.

Yet, thither, mortals,
Your way is wending.
Where, on the portals,
Till time be ending,
There stands this sentence, without reprieve :
Here all shall enter—and none shall leave !

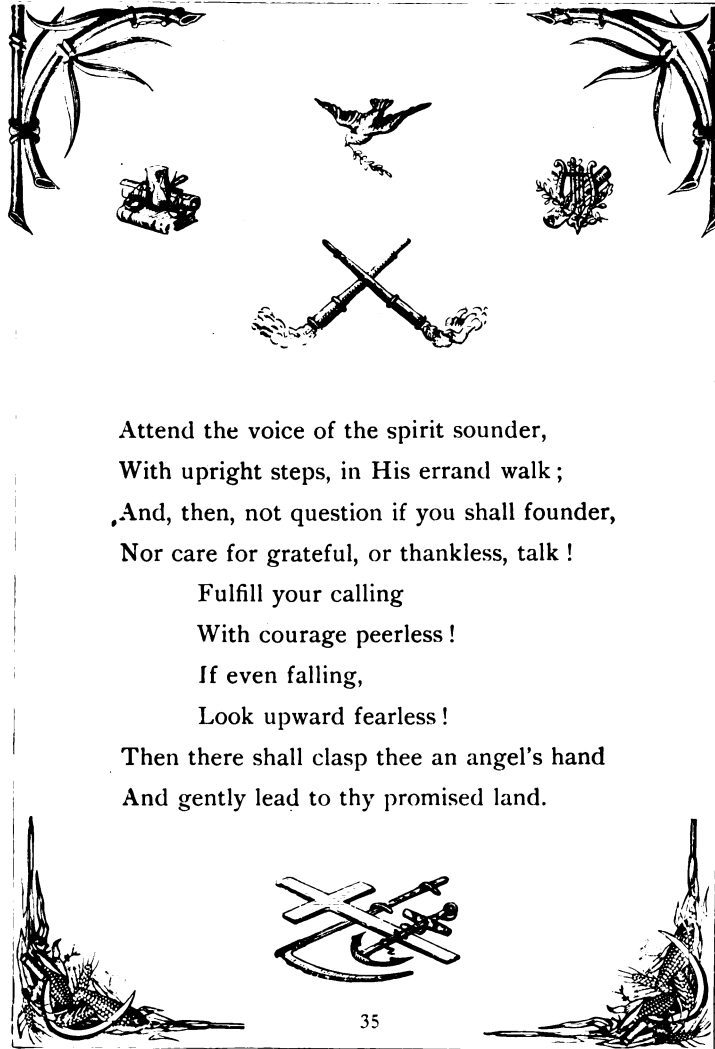


The earth devours you, with your achievements,
And locks together its jaws again,
If by beneficence, or bereavements,
You cheered, or injured, your fellow men —
But of this earth
Do not ask your measure ;
For, if in dearth,
Or if blest with treasure,
Your past, your present, what hence befall
He only knoweth, Who knoweth all.



What God requires of man, He told thee ;
He meted out, for your life's career,
What griefs should bend, and what cheers uphold thee
And what you had to accomplish here.

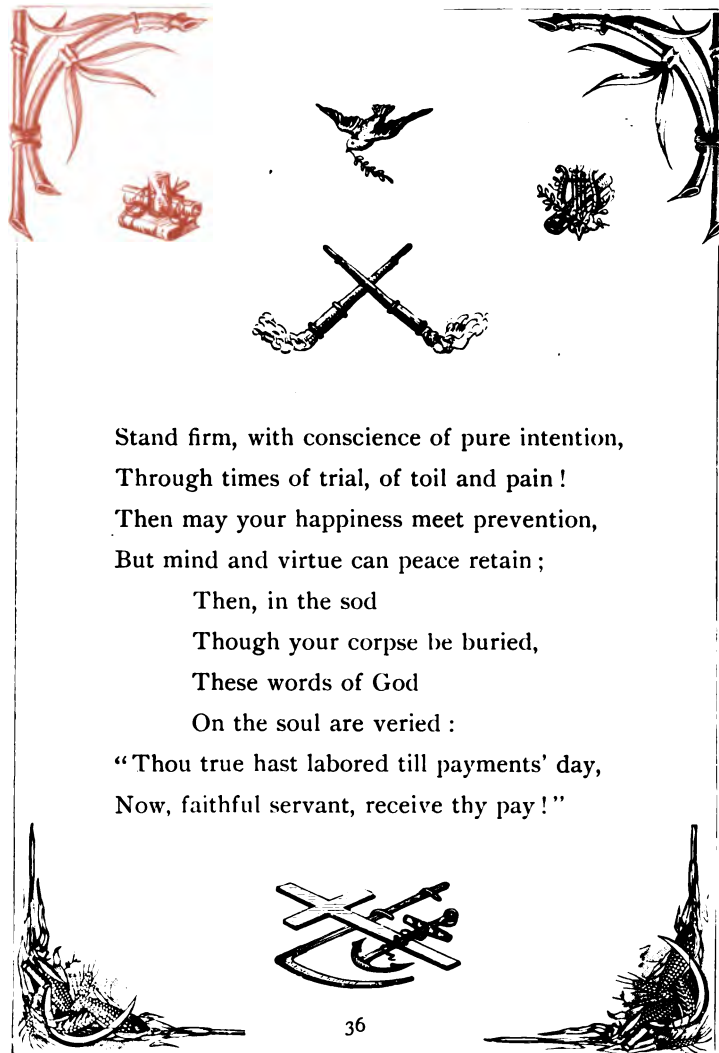
His power wrought you
What you transacted,
And wisdom taught you
That right you acted,
If but you heard, from submissive choice,
The great celestial spirit's voice.



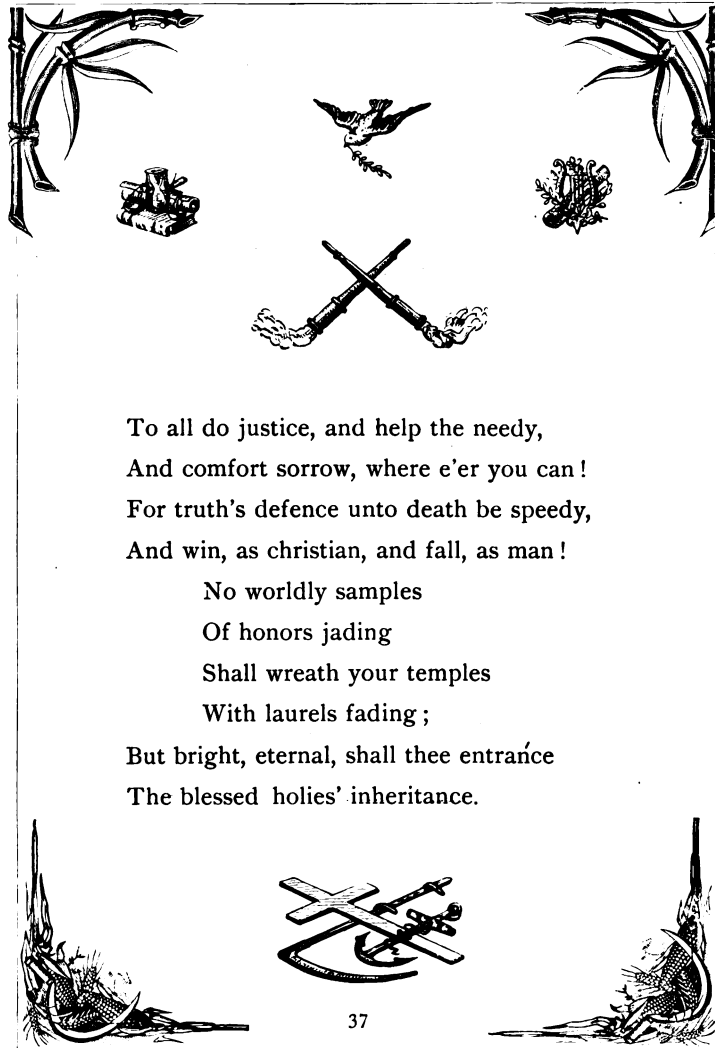
Attend the voice of the spirit sounder,
With upright steps, in His errand walk ;
And, then, not question if you shall founder,
Nor care for grateful, or thankless, talk !

Fulfill your calling
With courage peerless !
If even falling,
Look upward fearless !

Then there shall clasp thee an angel's hand
And gently lead to thy promised land.

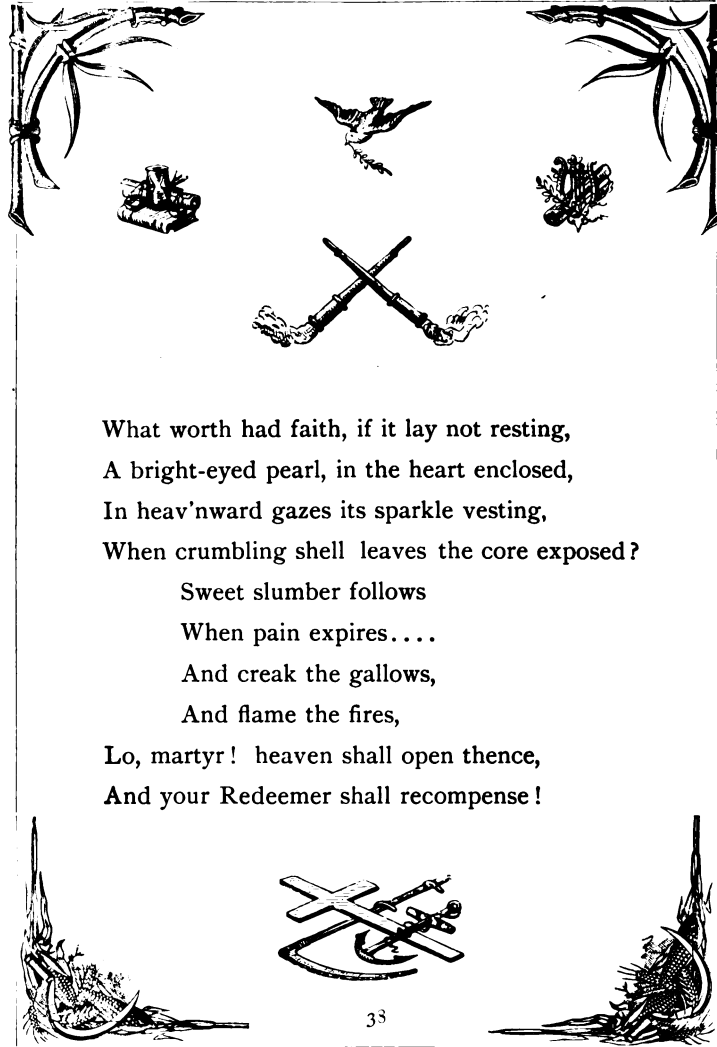


Stand firm, with conscience of pure intention,
Through times of trial, of toil and pain !
Then may your happiness meet prevention,
But mind and virtue can peace retain ;
Then, in the sod
Though your corpse be buried,
These words of God
On the soul are veried :
“Thou true hast labored till payments’ day,
Now, faithful servant, receive thy pay !”



To all do justice, and help the needy,
And comfort sorrow, where e'er you can !
For truth's defence unto death be speedy,
And win, as christian, and fall, as man !

No worldly samples
Of honors jading
Shall wreath your temples
With laurels fading ;
But bright, eternal, shall thee entrance
The blessed holies' inheritance.



What worth had faith, if it lay not resting,
A bright-eyed pearl, in the heart enclosed,
In heav'nward gazes its sparkle vesting,
When crumbling shell leaves the core exposed?

Sweet slumber follows

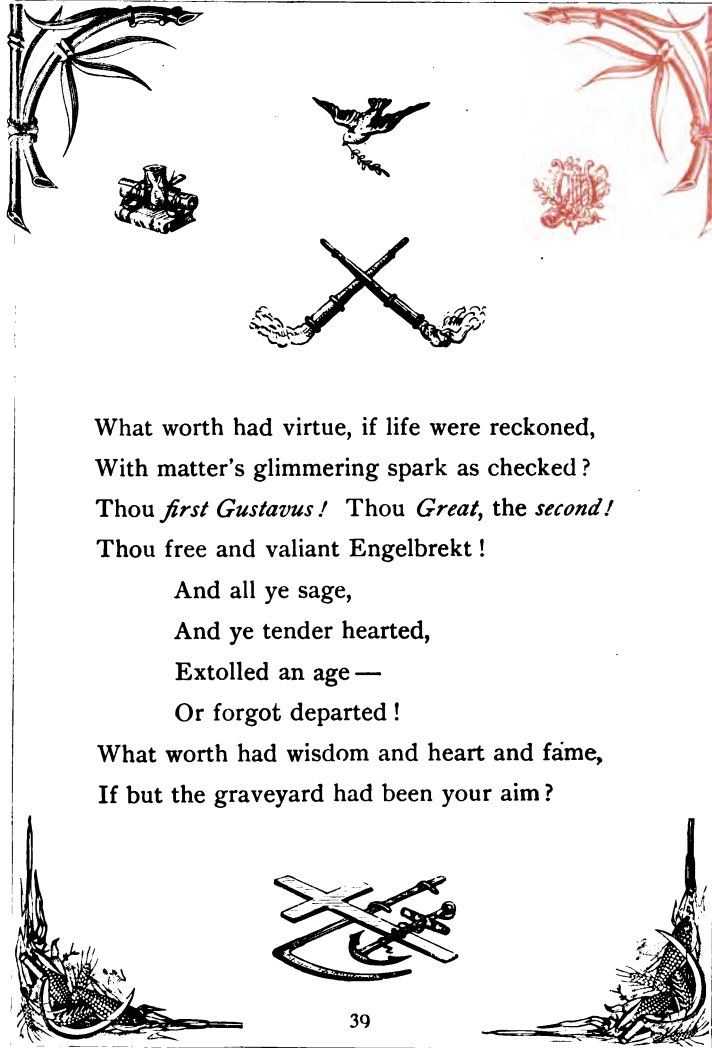
When pain expires. . . .

And creak the gallows,

And flame the fires,

Lo, martyr! heaven shall open thence,

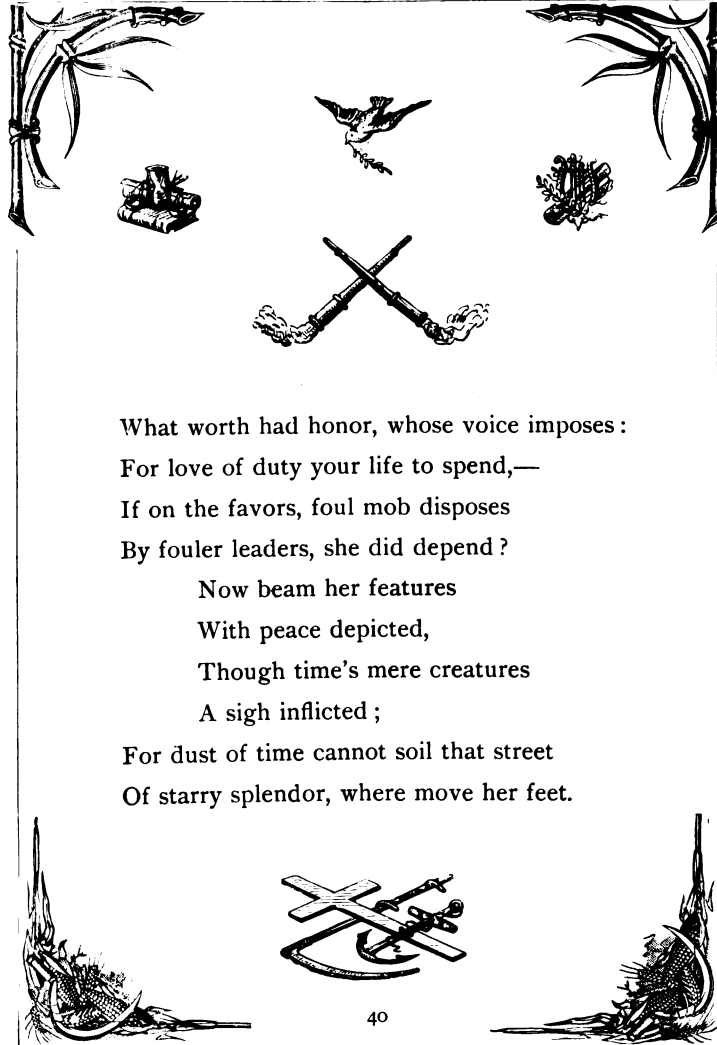
And your Redeemer shall recompense!



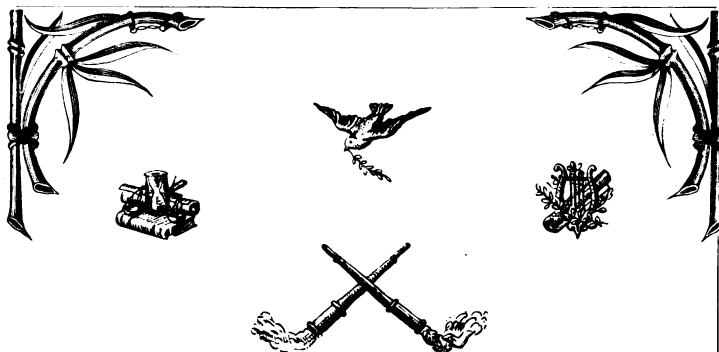
What worth had virtue, if life were reckoned,
With matter's glimmering spark as checked?
Thou *first Gustavus*! Thou *Great*, the *second*!
Thou free and valiant Engelbrekt!

And all ye sage,
And ye tender hearted,
Extolled an age —
Or forgot departed!

What worth had wisdom and heart and fame,
If but the graveyard had been your aim?



What worth had honor, whose voice imposes :
For love of duty your life to spend,—
If on the favors, foul mob disposes
By fouler leaders, she did depend ?
Now beam her features
With peace depicted,
Though time's mere creatures
A sigh inflicted ;
For dust of time cannot soil that street
Of starry splendor, where move her feet.



What worth had happiness, joy and gladness,
Those links of love in its purest scope,
If, when they sever, in gloomy sadness,
You could not join them by rays of hope?

What then were life?

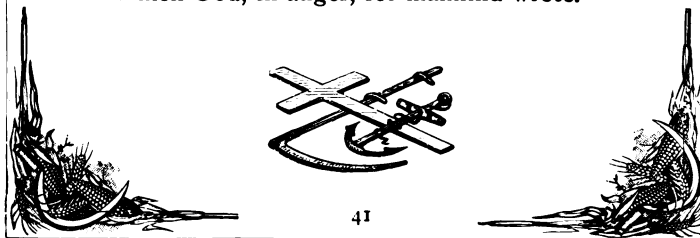
But a mental stigma,

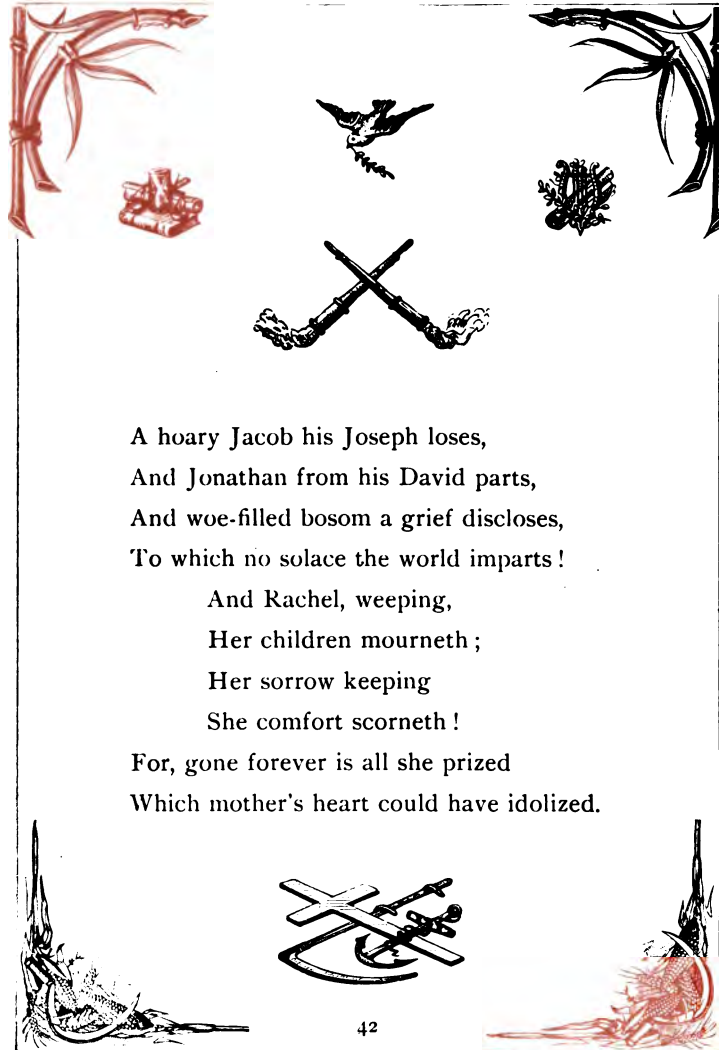
An empty strife,

An unsolved enigma!

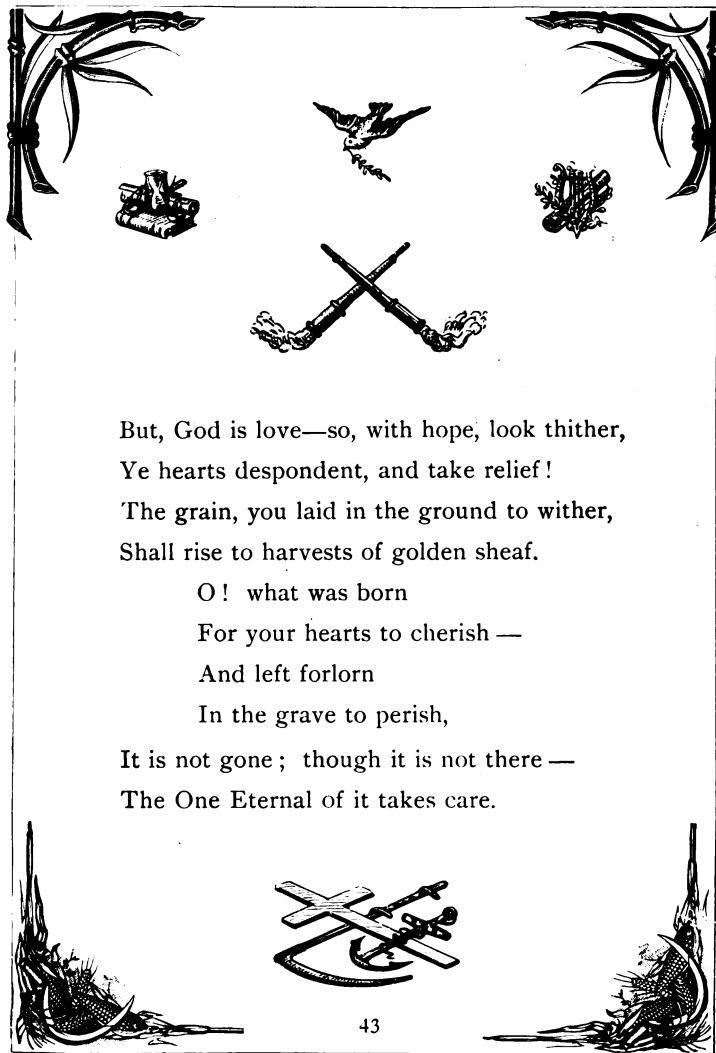
A heartless, cruel, Uriah note,

Which God, in anger, for mankind wrote.



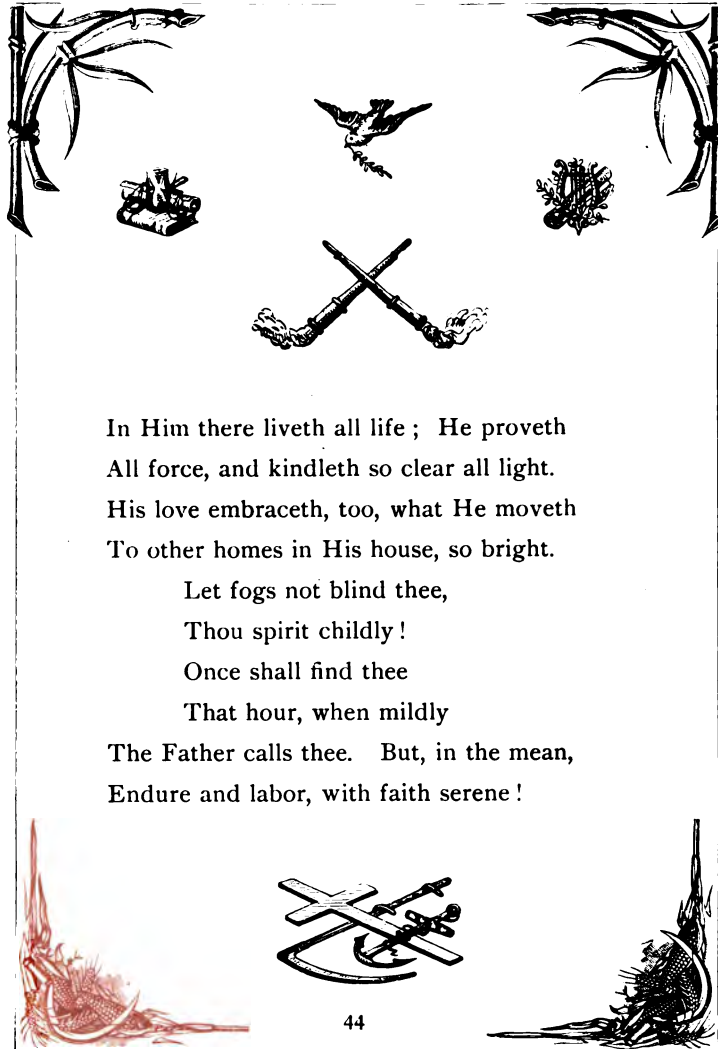


A hoary Jacob his Joseph loses,
And Jonathan from his David parts,
And woe-filled bosom a grief discloses,
To which no solace the world imparts !
And Rachel, weeping,
Her children mourneth ;
Her sorrow keeping
She comfort scorneth !
For, gone forever is all she prized
Which mother's heart could have idolized.

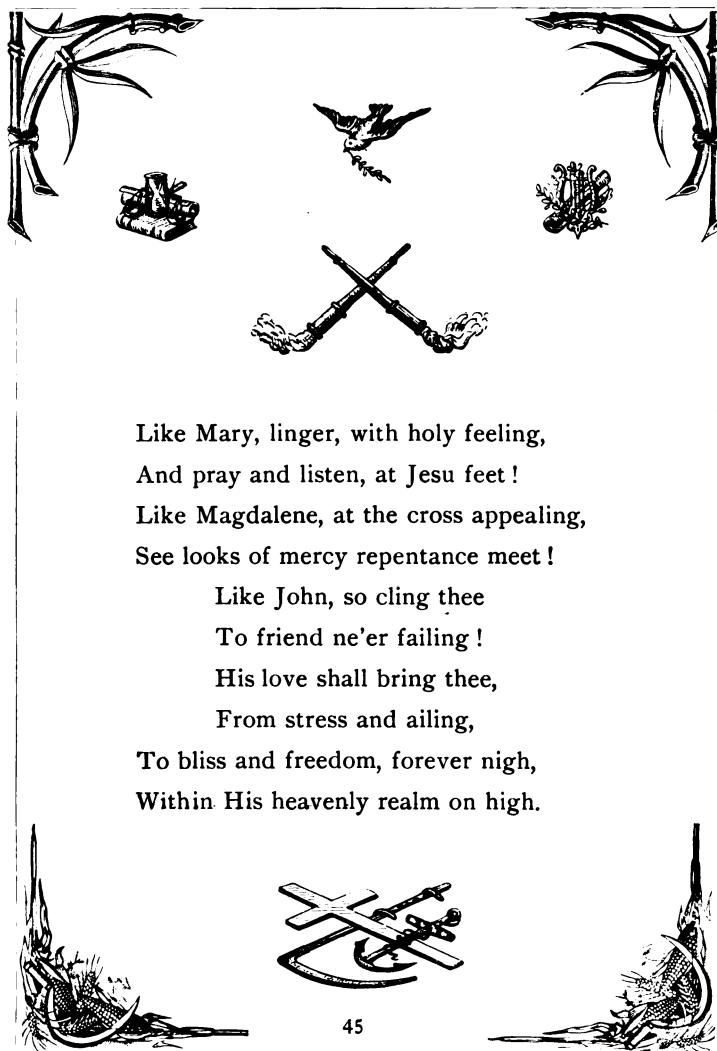


But, God is love—so, with hope, look thither,
Ye hearts despondent, and take relief !
The grain, you laid in the ground to wither,
Shall rise to harvests of golden sheaf.

O ! what was born
For your hearts to cherish —
And left forlorn
In the grave to perish,
It is not gone ; though it is not there —
The One Eternal of it takes care.

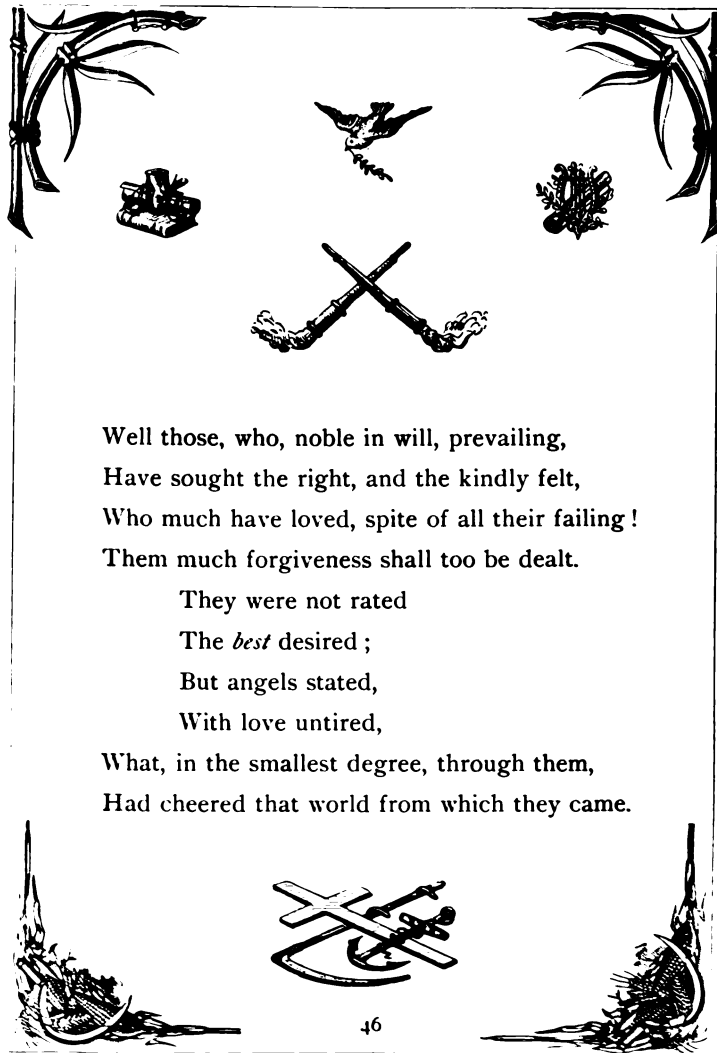


In Him there liveth all life ; He proveth
All force, and kindleth so clear all light.
His love embraceth, too, what He moveth
To other homes in His house, so bright.
Let fogs not blind thee,
Thou spirit childly !
Once shall find thee
That hour, when mildly
The Father calls thee. But, in the mean,
Endure and labor, with faith serene !



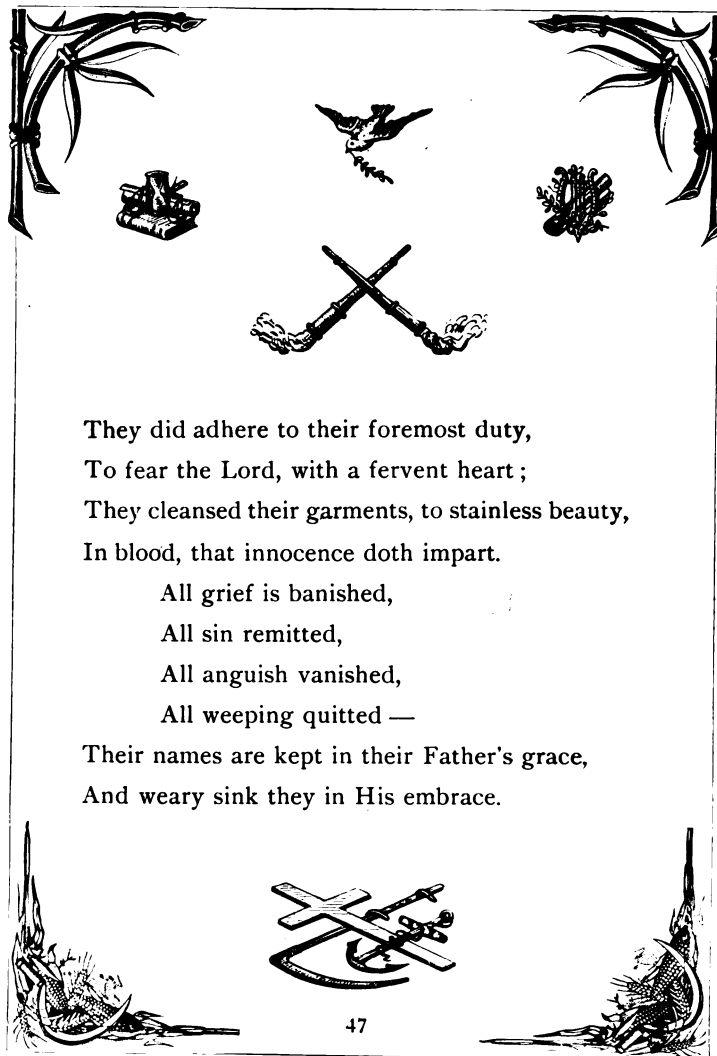
Like Mary, linger, with holy feeling,
And pray and listen, at Jesu feet !
Like Magdalene, at the cross appealing,
See looks of mercy repentance meet !

Like John, so cling thee
To friend ne'er failing !
His love shall bring thee,
From stress and ailing,
To bliss and freedom, forever nigh,
Within His heavenly realm on high.



Well those, who, noble in will, prevailing,
Have sought the right, and the kindly felt,
Who much have loved, spite of all their failing !
Them much forgiveness shall too be dealt.

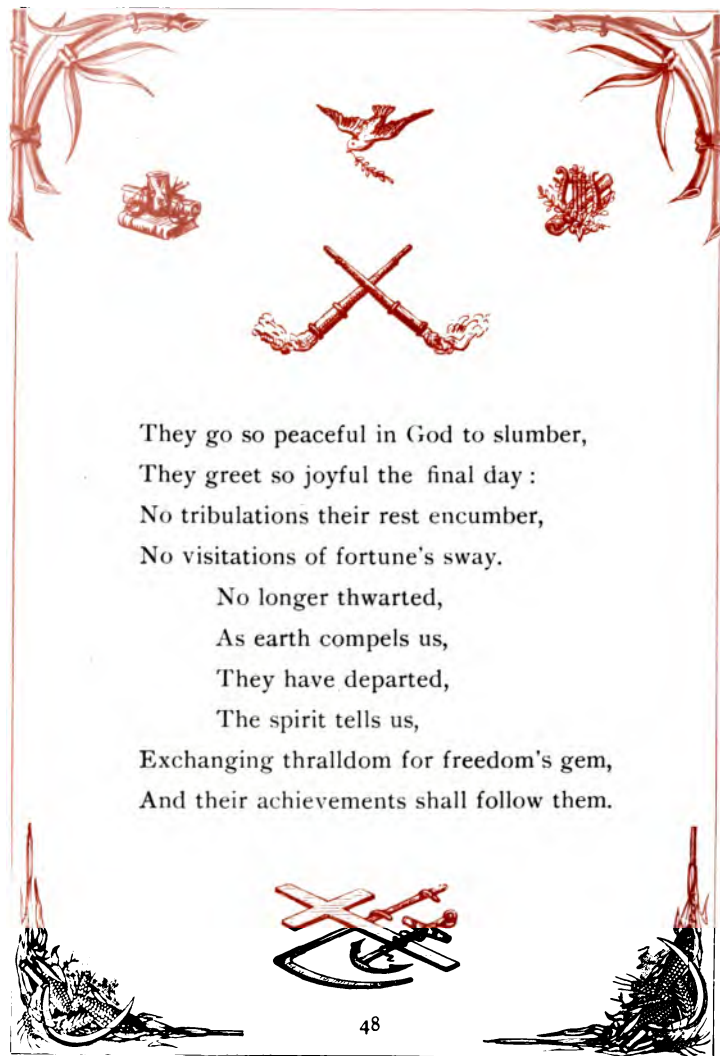
They were not rated
The *best* desired ;
But angels stated,
With love untired,
What, in the smallest degree, through them,
Had cheered that world from which they came.



They did adhere to their foremost duty,
To fear the Lord, with a fervent heart ;
They cleansed their garments, to stainless beauty,
In blood, that innocence doth impart.

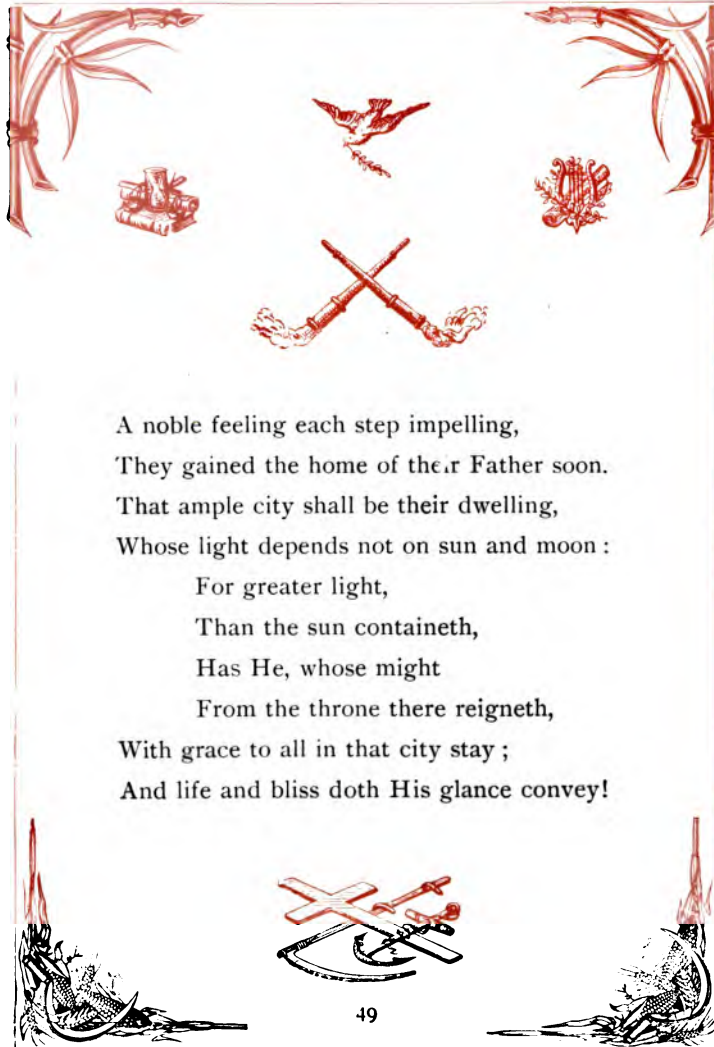
All grief is banished,
All sin remitted,
All anguish vanished,
All weeping quitted —

Their names are kept in their Father's grace,
And weary sink they in His embrace.

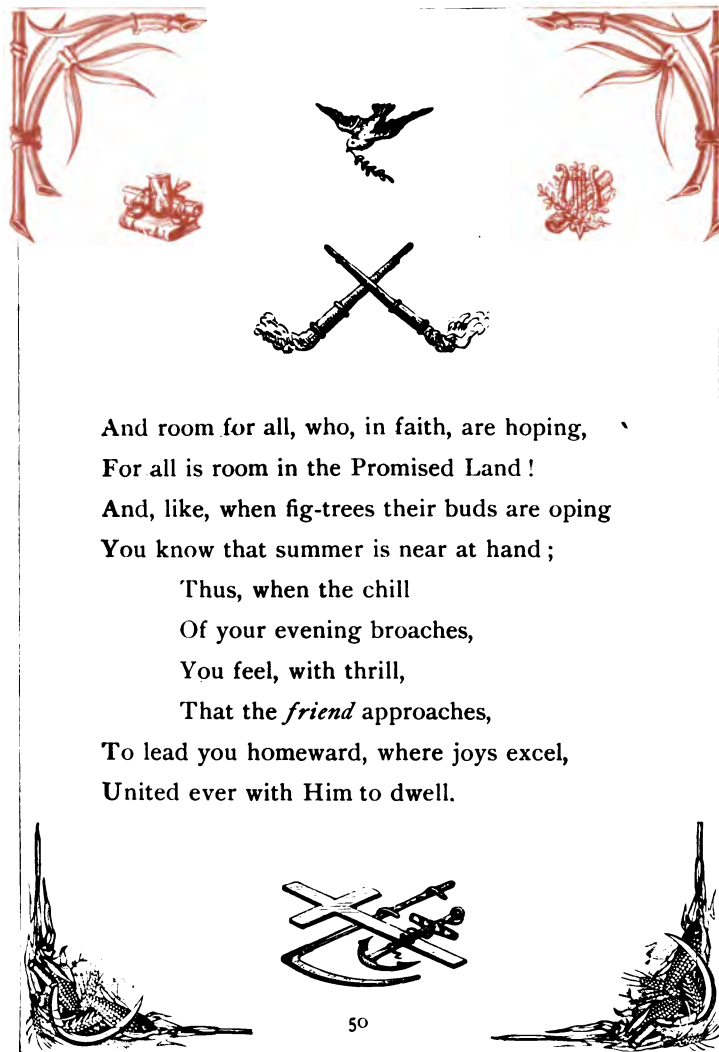


They go so peaceful in God to slumber,
They greet so joyful the final day :
No tribulations their rest encumber,
No visitations of fortune's sway.

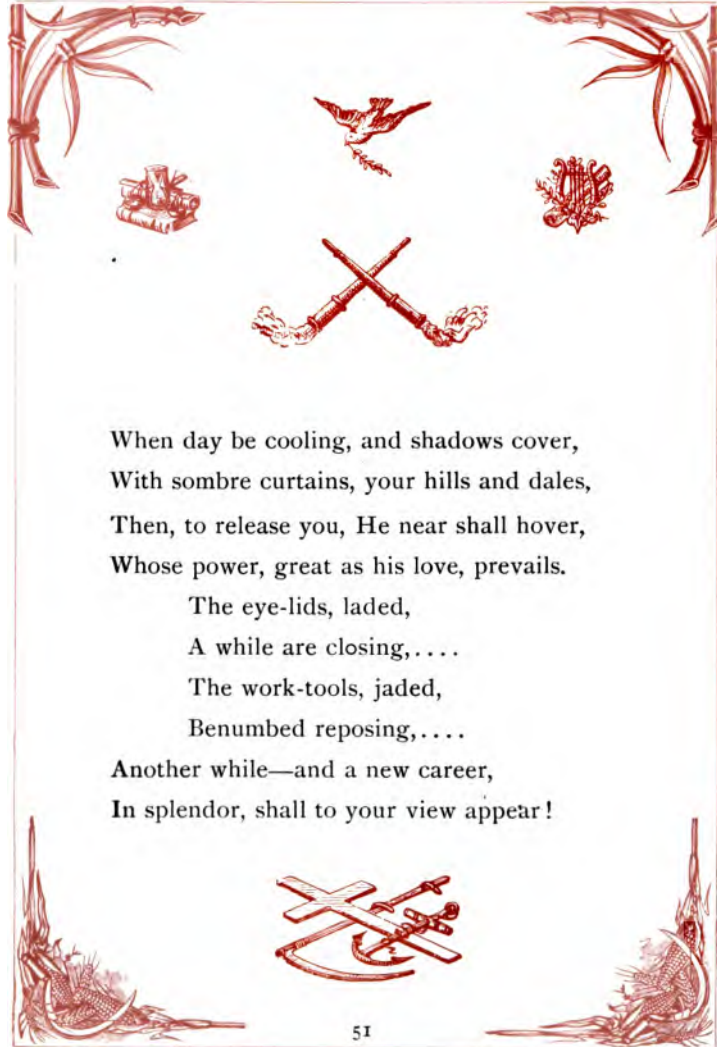
No longer thwarted,
As earth compels us,
They have departed,
The spirit tells us,
Exchanging thralldom for freedom's gem,
And their achievements shall follow them.



A noble feeling each step impelling,
They gained the home of their Father soon.
That ample city shall be their dwelling,
Whose light depends not on sun and moon :
For greater light,
Than the sun containeth,
Has He, whose might
From the throne there reigneth,
With grace to all in that city stay ;
And life and bliss doth His glance convey!



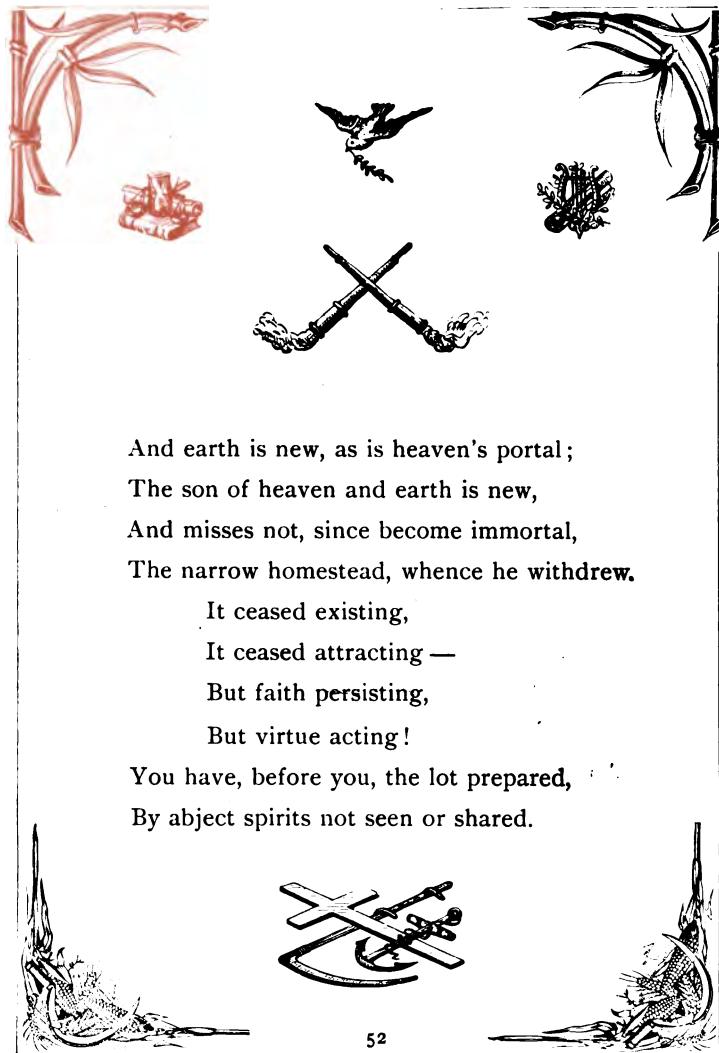
And room for all, who, in faith, are hoping,
For all is room in the Promised Land !
And, like, when fig-trees their buds are oping
You know that summer is near at hand ;
Thus, when the chill
Of your evening broaches,
You feel, with thrill,
That the *friend* approaches,
To lead you homeward, where joys excel,
United ever with Him to dwell.



When day be cooling, and shadows cover,
With sombre curtains, your hills and dales,
Then, to release you, He near shall hover,
Whose power, great as his love, prevails.

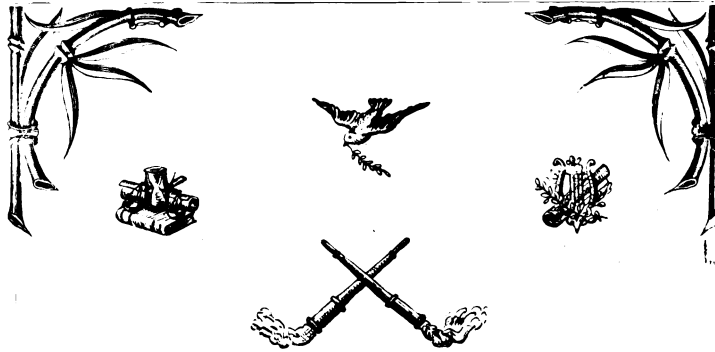
The eye-lids, laded,
A while are closing,
The work-tools, jaded,
Benumbed reposing,

Another while—and a new career,
In splendor, shall to your view appear !



And earth is new, as is heaven's portal;
The son of heaven and earth is new,
And misses not, since become immortal,
The narrow homestead, whence he withdrew.

It ceased existing,
It ceased attracting —
But faith persisting,
But virtue acting!
You have, before you, the lot prepared,
By abject spirits not seen or shared.



Then wiped away are all tears forever,
All wounds removed by the healing hand . . .
Again, midst corpses and biers, I never,
With torch inverted and quenched shall stand
 In darkness rife ; —
 But, the torch upturning,
 By flames of life
 I restore its burning —
And then, Seraphic, with you unite
In songs of praise at the Throne of Light.

